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A Philosophical Study of the Value of Modern Foreign Languages in the Secondary Curriculum: A Deweyian Analysis

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Abstract

In this research, I consider the value of studying Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) within a National Curriculum for the secondary phase. Arguably, schools are already struggling to accommodate the range of traditional and emerging subjects required to prepare pupils for life and work after school. In light of this, this study addresses the issue of low take up of MFL in schools – and universities – a trend that is impacting on teacher shortages across the full range of languages. It also starts from the identification of low intrinsic motivation amongst pupils to study a foreign language, whilst English continues to develop as the accepted language of business, the Internet, youth culture and tourism. Against this background, this research suggests that the available literature focuses on the instrumental value of modern foreign language learning (if value is mentioned at all). Since intrinsic value cannot be measured in terms of empirical data, I adopt a philosophical approach to this study. In doing this, I turn to the work of John Dewey, in particular his 1938 work, *Experience and Education* in order to highlight the value of MFL in the contemporary school curriculum. Through a detailed reading of this seminal work, I consider Dewey's notions of continuity and interaction, as well as the role of the educator. I then consider the implications of these concepts for contemporary teaching and learning in MFL as there are important lessons for present-day practice in Dewey's work. I suggest recommendations for policy makers, institutions, and professionals for improving pupils' experience of MFL, and for reinforcing its value in one's education.

Keywords: Dewey, MFL, continuity, interaction, value, experience, curriculum, education

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Dedication

Thank you to my amazing family for always believing in me.

I would also like to dedicate this paper to Simon Green who trained me to teach a long time ago and has continued to inspire me throughout my whole career.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study considers the value of studying Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in a contemporary educational curriculum in a secondary school in England. This comes at a time of mass migration to the United Kingdom (UK) when the teaching and learning of languages is a significant contemporary issue urgently required in order to aid integration and, as voiced in a contentious recent speech by the UK's Prime minister, would avoid radicalisation in some sectors of the community (Cameron, 2016). We must also consider wider socio-political issues related to language learning such as global citizenship,¹ and indeed whether teaching MFL is an attractive career in terms of status when compared with other jobs (Goldwyn-Simpkins, 2015).

In the UK, the study of a foreign language was made compulsory within the primary school curriculum only in September 2014 (DfE, 2013), yet has been optional in Key Stage 4² (KS4) since 2004. This has caused a major decrease in the number of pupils gaining qualifications in MFL (Tinsley & Han, 2012). Since GCSE³ uptake of MFL has fallen, this has subsequently had a dramatic impact on the number of students studying MFL post-16, and has seen many schools fail to recruit sufficient

¹ Global citizenship is currently promoted in English schools and aims to change peoples' attitudes and actions towards others, highlighting the need to care about other people and the world we live in and encourage inclusion and mutual respect. (United World schools, no date)

² Key Stage 4 is the official term referring to two years of education for all pupils aged 14-16 in schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

³ General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) is an examination of a specific subject taken by students in Key Stage 4 in schools in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is currently the most popular qualification in KS4 and most pupils will take this examination in all subjects that they study.

pupils to provide viable A-level courses in MFL (Board & Tinsley, 2015).

Consequently, Higher Education MFL departments are forced to close (Coleman, 2011; Low, 2007). The remaining undergraduate providers have been forced to adjust their selection criteria and course content to encompass the wider issues caused by this situation, perhaps focussing more on motivating students and ensuring an enjoyable experience rather than focussing on improving accuracy and fluency in language. My particular interest lies in where the future teachers will come from with such decreasing numbers of MFL specialists coinciding with an acute shortage of MFL teachers.

In terms of my own personal context, after teaching French, Spanish and German for almost twenty years, and leading the MFL department in a range of secondary schools, I am now in my third year leading the Secondary MFL (French, German and Spanish) subject-specific training for Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)⁴ initial teacher education at a small faith foundation university in the North of England. This involves recruiting, training and assessing specialist teachers of MFL, and working in partnership with a large number of school colleagues. This institution was established as a faith-based teacher training college in the mid-1960s and has developed first as a university college, and subsequently as a full university. It offers a range of subjects at undergraduate and postgraduate level, alongside playing a leading role in providing teaching education in the area.

⁴ PGCE is offered as a level 6 and level 7 qualification and is an intensive course which involves training in pedagogy and subject knowledge development alongside considerable school experience. The course usually lasts one academic year and successful trainees are recommended for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) which is a requirement for teaching in maintained schools in England and Wales.

Historically the Government has offered financial incentives in the form of bursaries to encourage well-qualified graduates into teaching. The amounts of money offered have increased considerably since the introduction of tuition fees (Hobson *et al.* 2009) and now vary hugely depending on the gravity of teacher shortage in different curriculum areas, and the qualifications of prospective applicants. I feel justified in describing the need to recruit MFL teachers as 'acute', since at a time when the tuition fees for the 2016-17 PGCE course are set at £9000, bursaries of £25,000 are offered to MFL graduates with an Upper Second Class degree (DfE, 2015). I fear that since successful applicants are currently only required to seek employment as a teacher at the end of the course, people may be attracted to consider training as a teacher due to financial motivation rather than a desire to remain in the profession, which is currently devoid of any financial incentive. Perhaps the range of routes⁵ into teaching could be seen by graduates as a way to pay off student debt rather than the beginning of a new vocation and professional development.

In 2003 at a time when the Labour Government encouraged a *Languages for All: Languages for Life* (DfES, 2002) approach (in response to the recommendations from *Nuffield Languages Inquiry* of 2000)⁶, 73% of KS4 pupils took GCSE in a modern foreign language. This figure had fallen to 59% by 2005, a year after Government plans to make the study of MFL in KS4 optional were publicised and has continued to fall ever since - 40% in 2011 (Taylor & Marsden, 2011). During a

⁵ In addition to the PGCE teacher training course the following options are also available; School-based training routes which include Schools Direct and SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training) programmes, and smaller numbers of applicants train via the Teach First, Armed Forces and Researchers in Education routes.

⁶ Nuffield Languages Inquiry was set up by Nuffield Trust in 1998 to investigate MFL provision and future needs. Their report 'Languages: the next generation' was published in May 2000

thorough review of Languages provision by Lord Dearing⁷ in 2006, although a commitment was made to making early language learning obligatory in Key Stage 2⁸ (KS2) by 2010, and schools were advised to make languages more appealing, meaningful and engaging to students, no recommendation was made to make MFL a compulsory subject in KS4 (Dearing, 2006). The Coalition Government⁹ did not prioritise the formal introduction of MFL into the primary curriculum in 2010 but this did happen in September 2014. As a linguist, I welcome the positive step of bringing forward the formal teaching of MFL, but find it particularly disappointing that little attention has been given to transition from primary to secondary MFL progression (Chambers, 2014) and that the majority of pupils in English schools still leave school with no formal qualifications in MFL (Board & Tinsley, 2014).

Whilst examining the breadth of literature available regarding the teaching and learning of MFL, it seems pertinent here to consider the key questions for me and others in my position, most obviously, to reflect on the value of learning a foreign language. Indeed, should our pupils be encouraged to study MFL since ever-growing numbers of pupils in English schools are already bilingual - 80% of pupils in some areas of London and 12% of pupils nationally (Safford & Drury, 2013) or consider learning English as an Additional language (EAL) a far greater priority (Mistry & Sood, 2010).

⁷ Lord Dearing was commissioned by the Secretary of State to advise on how to recover from large numbers of KS4 pupils not studying MFL. His report was published in December 2006 but did not recommend making MFL compulsory in KS4.

⁸ Key Stage 2 is the name given to Years 3 to 6 in English primary schools. Pupils are aged 7 – 11.

⁹ In 2010 following the general election which resulted in a hung parliament, a Coalition Government was formed by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties. This remained in power until the 2015 general election.

In attempting to address some of these key questions, this study will take a philosophical approach, the detailed justification for which will be provided later. However at this point, it is sufficient to say that the question of should MFL remain part of the secondary curriculum is a deeply philosophical one, as are questions such as, “where should MFL sit within the curriculum?” and indeed “what are the actual aims of education itself?”

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Research abounds on a range of themes connected with language teaching.

However, this is not all relevant to the teaching of MFL in England. A large amount of the available literature concentrates on the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)¹⁰. For schools, the teaching of English as an Additional Language (EAL)¹¹ is an increasingly important issue with growing numbers of pupils who speak another language in the home.

The literature concerning MFL tends not to differentiate by language, though this may be significant in considering some aspects of teaching and learning in the field. The generic term 'MFL' is used to refer to a range of languages taught in schools; whilst French, Spanish and German are most commonly taught (Board & Tinsley, 2015), some schools include Italian, Russian, Mandarin or Arabic under the umbrella of modern foreign languages. This diversity represents the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of pupil communities in some cases, the specialisms of teachers or perceived need and benefit in others (Zhang & Li, 2010; British Council, 2013; Board & Tinsley, 2015). Scholarly sources on teaching and learning in MFL are not only

¹⁰ TEFL is when the English language is taught to students whose mother tongue is a different language. TEFL can take place abroad, in an English-speaking country, in a state school curriculum or privately. TEFL can also be known as TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) or TESOL (Teaching English as a Second or Other Language)

¹¹ EAL is the term used in schools for pupils who speak English as an additional language. These bilingual learners communicate in and use more than one language as part of their daily routine.

focussed on the United Kingdom and, given the recent formal introduction of foreign languages into the primary curriculum, early language learning features heavily in the available literature. This literature review will focus on the teaching of MFL in English secondary¹² schools, but will also draw attention to evidence from other sectors to provide a useful comparison. From a systematic review of the literature, the following themes have emerged; the challenges facing language learners and teachers, good practice in MFL teaching including suggestions to increase uptake and comparison with other countries and different educational sectors encompassing transition. I will adopt a thematic approach, exploring these themes in more detail.

Challenges facing language learners and teachers

i Pupil factors

Swarbrick (2011) believes that over-reliance on the teacher and a lack of ability to use language independently and creatively are central to the much published issues of low motivation and poor behaviour in language lessons in English schools.

However, Gieve and Cunico (2012) emphasise that disconnection of language from cultural content has a powerful, negative influence on students' experience of learning a language and can result in poor awareness of language. Research by Graham (2004) cites complexity of activities and lack of aptitude as the principal reasons for lack of achievement in MFL and suggests that unmotivated students are reluctant to investigate how they can improve their learning or strive to overcome these issues when they find the subject difficult. Bolster (2009) stresses the influence

¹² Secondary schools provide education for pupils aged 11 to 16 or 11 to 19. Pupils attend secondary school after primary school. After secondary school they can either begin higher education or begin employment or training.

of continuity on language learners' motivation and the need for transition to secondary school to be managed efficiently as primary MFL becomes more embedded.

In their comparative study of MFL and Physical Education (PE), Graham *et al.* (2012) found that even gifted pupils continue to value subjects stereotypically and consider success in MFL the epitome of academic achievement and themselves aspire more to doing well in PE and thus being healthy and fit. In their survey to investigate reasons why pupils will or will not choose to study a language, Taylor and Marsden (2011) found that instrumental value such as to broaden the scope of future university choice or potential future benefit dominates pupils' thinking when opting to continue MFL study rather than enjoyment of the subject. In order to realise how serious this matter is, it is important to highlight that the United Kingdom came bottom of all European countries in a survey of Language Skills in Europe conducted by CILT (2005).

Elitism is a recurrent theme in the literature available on MFL teaching. Graham and Santos (2015) suggest MFL are considered more difficult, assessed more rigorously and are therefore more prestigious. In addition to this, research by Bray (2007) found that pupils consider the way MFL are taught to be boring and not worth the effort since English is widely spoken.

ii Teacher factors

In the literature available, attention is drawn to the obvious challenges for teachers of MFL. The issue of low levels of motivation amongst pupils features heavily in research on language teaching. Research by Board and Tinsley (2015) identified low take-up of languages post-16, competition from other subjects, providing continuity

of learning from KS2¹³ to Key Stage 3¹⁴ (KS3) and motivating students as the biggest challenges facing MFL teachers in state schools. However, Afitska (2015) laments the lack of research into how immersion and corrective feedback could influence second language acquisition. Following the Labour Government's 2004 decision to make languages optional in KS4 which resulted in a rapid decline of GCSE entries, the Coalition Government introduced the EBacc in 2011 to measure the performance of pupils achieving a high GCSE grade in five subjects, including a language (Graham & Santos, 2015). Tinsley and Board (2013) have reported only a slight increase in GCSE uptake for MFL since the introduction of this measure. Since many schools end KS3 at the end of Year 8, Swarbrick (2011) emphasises that the sum total of many UK pupils' MFL education has been merely two years with a minimal requirement of only two hours per week. Swarbrick advocates GCSE reform which will see an end to intensive fast track courses and lead to gaps in education making future MFL study even less likely.

The majority of research since 2000 attributes the fall in MFL uptake to the government's decision to make MFL optional in KS4 (Coleman et al. 2007), (Broady, 2006) and Dearing's failure to reverse this situation in his 2006 Languages Review (Evans, 2007). Macaro (2008) however believes the 'Languages for All' policy alongside the exclusive use of the target language favoured in the early 1990s actually initiated the decline of MFL long before pupils could choose to opt out.

Changes to the GCSE curriculum with an over-reliance on memorising techniques to

¹³ At the end of KS2 (aged 11), pupils in England and Wales move from primary to secondary school. The secondary school a pupil attends will not necessarily offer the same language a pupil has studied in KS2 or be aware of the topics and content covered.

¹⁴ Key Stage 3 is the term used for the three years of compulsory schooling in England and Wales from age 11 to 14. This usually takes place in secondary schools.

prepare for controlled assessments¹⁵ have resulted in a return to grammar-translation approaches to teaching used in the 1970s largely through the medium of English which is failing to motivate today's learners (Macaro, 2008).

iii Public factors

Graham & Santos (2015) and Bollen & Baten (2010) believe the negative bias of the press to be influential on the public's perception of MFL. In contrast to Lanvers and Coleman (2013), Graham and Santos (2015) found few positive references to MFL in the press in 2013 when compared with 2007. Those they found, measured success in terms of examination results or the newly introduced EBacc.¹⁶

iv Social factors

In their study of sociocultural influences on language learning, Grenfell and Harris (2013) found gender to have surprisingly little influence on language ability amongst pupils aged 12 – 13 years yet significantly more boys than girls¹⁷ cease studying a language aged 13 or 14. In line with research by Norton and Toohey (2001), aptitude in learning a language is not enough without appropriate opportunities to use these skills. Pupils who are bilingual in English schools do not feel this skill is acknowledged at school and are less likely to fulfil their potential (DfES, 2004).

¹⁵ Controlled assessments replaced coursework in GCSE and since 2010 have been used to assess Speaking (30%) and Writing (30%) in GCSE for MFL. Listening (20%) and Reading (20%) continue to be assessed with an external examination at the end of the course.

¹⁶ The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measures school performance, tracking the number of students with grade C or above at GCSE level in five academic subjects – English, Mathematics, History or Geography, a science and a language. The Government hopes this will encourage pupils to choose academic rather than vocational subjects.

¹⁷ In 2010, 178,595 girls were entered for GCSE in French, German or Spanish compared with 136,899 boys (JCQ, 2010)

Graham *et al.* (2012) emphasise that MFL uptake at GCSE is higher in more affluent areas and amongst more able pupils. Coleman (2011) illustrates the impact this has on universities now that MFL is the subject with the largest proportion of students from fee-paying schools. Despite fee-paying schools educating only 7% of pupils in the UK, 29.7%, 27.2% and 34.2% of entries for A level French, German and Spanish respectively (and 42.9%, 42.5% and 48.5% of the highest grades) come from these schools.

v University factors

Reisz (2014) alerts us to the sad reality of MFL undergraduate provision; the continued fall in pupil numbers has caused more than a third of British universities to stop offering MFL degrees and language degrees are almost exclusively concentrated in the highly esteemed Russell Group universities¹⁸ (Coleman, 2011). Gallagher-Brett and Broady (2012) hint at the irony that at a time of increasing globalisation of study, less UK university undergraduates are choosing to study MFL. The year abroad is integral to language degrees, but poses a major barrier to students struggling to afford a university education. McNeill *et al.* (2007) stress the unique characteristics and dual function of MFL as the object and medium of study; students are expected to perform in a language and simultaneously develop their competency of this language and learn aspects of its cultural heritage.

Good Practice in MFL Teaching

¹⁸ There are currently 24 British universities within the Russell Group. Each member shares a reputation for research and academic prestige.

Despite the concern expressed in previous paragraphs, the available literature highlights many features of good practice regarding the teaching and learning of MFL, including suggestions to improve the current situation, improve the status of MFL in UK schools and boost the number of pupils studying MFL.

In their study of 2007 press data, Graham and Santos (2015) found hardly any references to the value of language learning, and the limited mention of language focussed on this as an elitist academic subject or an accomplishment people may have rather than the process of acquiring proficiency. This gives a very clear message: that young people are not clear of the future benefits an investment in learning a language could bring, particularly in terms of their own fulfilment rather than contributing to the community's economy.

Since 2007, National Curriculum (NC) Programmes of Study (PoS) for MFL have stressed the role of intercultural understanding in contextualising the subject for our pupils (Woodgate-Jones & Grenfell, 2012). With the removal of NC Levels¹⁹ in 2014, the revised NC is significantly less prescriptive, allowing language teachers the freedom to choose their own subject content and move away from regular assessment against NC levels which left many teachers reliant on textbooks with accompanying assessment schemes and specific content. The 2014 NC for KS2 (DfE, 2013) gives schools the opportunity to introduce language learning via any language of their choice, modern or ancient. Reisz (2014) goes so far as to say that teaching Classics could even save UK modern languages. Bolster (2009) believes that early language learning can foster positive points of view regarding other

¹⁹ National Curriculum levels were used to assess each school subject from KS1 to KS3 and were reported to the Department for Education at the end of each Key Stage and used as an indicator of progress in national and international comparison of schools and for school inspections. Work in each subject attainment target was assessed from levels 1 to 8 (8 being the highest).

languages and cultures. However, Swarbrick (2011) fears that pupils who are unable to continue studying the same language when progressing to secondary education become disenchanted and are at a disadvantage. Macaro (2008) feels strongly that forcing KS4 pupils to continue with MFL is unlikely to help develop their intercultural understanding and that any measures to improve pupils' experience of MFL should focus on Year 7 pupils.

Jones (2014) emphasises the role of initial teacher education in disseminating models of good practice in MFL teaching and learning as can be seen in her research on moving away from formal modular assessment towards embedding formative assessment and monitoring strategies in day to day practice. Swarbrick (2011) highlights the crucial role of the mentor in teacher training and their need for professional development and dedicated time to support trainees. Swarbrick (2011) looks forward to GCSE reform, hoping this will permit teachers to focus on teaching rather than assessing pupils. Research by Legg (2009) revealed that integrating music and singing into teenagers' MFL lessons can have a positive impact on raising achievement, helping to improve pronunciation, memory and vocabulary learning. Glover *et al.* (2007) remind us not to underestimate the impact of using new technologies, especially interactive whiteboards, on motivating pupils and encouraging participation. To develop this idea further, Connolly *et al.* (2011) found alternate reality games (ARGs) improved motivation in MFL and helped pupils develop useful collaborative skills. Bray (2007) investigated the use of celebrity role models to promote language learning but fears pupils may be more influenced by comedy derived from linguistic differences or continue to associate MFL with elitism instead of seeing MFL as a desirable attribute.

Research by Gieve and Cunico (2012) advocates Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) where several subjects are taught in the target language, a teaching method already established in Canada, popular in some parts of Europe and being piloted by a few schools in Britain as having huge potential for enhancing cross-curricular development, intercultural understanding, language skills and motivation. Swarbrick (2011) feels this could provide students with more challenging subject content and learning experiences for pupils. However, Swain (2000) and Nassaji and Fotos (2011) highlight that simply being taught in another language is not enough. Although this would significantly deepen pupils' comprehension and vocabulary, grammar instruction is required in order to develop an awareness of accuracy in a language. The question of how to address poor pupil motivation remains. Swarbrick (2011) advocates using new technologies to give pupils more autonomy and independence and thus improve attitudes and behaviour. Although research into the benefits of vocational language courses is lacking (Pachler, 1997) (Allen and Davies, 2009), these can offer pupils an insight into the professional world, help develop life skills, promote the importance of speaking and writing skills and forge valuable links with industry (Allen and Davies, 2009). This is reinforced in Gallagher-Brett and Broady's 2012 report on MFL in higher education which emphasises the need for universities to work in partnership with the community and businesses in order to provide real and relevant language learning. Doughty (2011), however, questions whether attempts to bridge and link social capital with educational institutions will be enough to stem the decrease in MFL uptake.

Evidence from different sectors of education and international comparisons

The fall in numbers of pupils studying MFL unfortunately does not only relate to the UK. Gallagher-Brett & Broady (2012) and Graham *et al.* (2012) reveal that this relates to other Anglophone countries at a time of increasing global mobility. 40% of Australian school leavers in the 1960s graduated with a second language but only 13% in 2007 (Go8, 2007). There is no requirement to study languages other than English and Irish in the Republic of Ireland (Gallagher-Brett & Broady, 2012) and it appears that the United States is the only country where pupils can complete their school education without any MFL study (Duncan, 2010). Despite research (Goldenberg, 2008; August & Shanahan, 2006) which proves that teaching pupils to read in their native language will increase their skills in English and the cognitive gain of using more than one language (Cummins, 2000; Bialystok, 2007), the vast majority of bilingual (Hispanic) pupils in US schools are only taught English (Menken, 2013). Baker (2011) and Menken (2013) highlight that this has a hugely negative impact which results in monolingualism over time and disadvantages these pupils academically and socially.

Language education faces challenges beyond the English-speaking world, too. Sakamoto (2012) outlines how Japan is struggling to improve provision of bilingual education in high schools and implement English into elementary education and Lin (2007) identifies a significant disparity in MFL (English) provision between urban and rural schools in Taiwan. In their research on language uptake in Swedish schools, Hyltenstam and Österberg (2010:85) describe MFL provision other than English as “alarming”.

The position of MFL in tertiary education is just as bleak. Gieve and Cunico (2012) talk of a dualism between language and culture in language degrees, and Worton’s

2009 report on HE languages provision in England describes MFL as a 'vulnerable' subject whose value and significance are realised neither by the Government nor prospective applicants (Worton, 2009: 3). In their case study, Gallagher-Brett and Canning (2011) stress the need for adequate preparation for transition to university by schools, even going so far as to say that A levels such as English Literature and History might help potential MFL undergraduate study.

Primary languages however are enjoying a renaissance. CILT, ALL & ISMLA (2011) reported in its 2010 Languages Trends Survey that large numbers of pupils in 80% of the schools who responded had studied a language in KS2 and since MFL were made compulsory in KS2 in 2014, this is feeding through to secondary schools. As a result of this, transition from KS2 to secondary school needs further attention. Bolster (2009) reported that secondary MFL teachers face mixed ability classes with a wide range of prior experience. Early language learning has so many potential benefits. Doyé and Hurrell (1997) cite brain function to be optimal for language learning before the age of nine. They also highlight the positive influence this can have on pupils' attitude towards different languages and promote intercultural understanding (IU) which has been included as a key feature of the KS2 National Curriculum (DfES, 2005) since 2005. However, if primary provision is varied and inconsistent and does not focus on transferable language skills (Bolster, 2009), a lack of transition can be responsible for pupils losing interest in the subject particularly when secondary teachers assume they must revisit the basics or if pupils have no opportunity to continue the same language (Chambers, 2014).

Swarbrick (2011) feels that with over 300 languages spoken by pupils in London schools, the British reputation for lacking skill in learning languages cannot be valid. The problem instead is a lack of curriculum time and opportunities for continuity.

Conclusion

Whilst language teachers welcome primary MFL, without effective transition to secondary school, pupils are unlikely to fulfil the potential this opportunity offers. The question remains as to whether embracing opportunities to engage students such as establishing more links with stakeholders and international partners or adopting the use of new technologies to encourage pupils to see an obvious purpose for MFL will be enough since, as long as press articles and Government reports concerning MFL have a negative tone, we cannot realistically expect pupils to value the study of MFL or buck the trend of low uptake against an ever-increasing choice of subjects perceived by students as easier.

Reflections on the literature

The existing literature on teaching and learning MFL tells us that English schools and universities are failing to keep pace with most European countries in terms of MFL uptake (European Commission, 2014) despite a range of initiatives to improve the situation (Macaro *et al.*, 2016). Much of this literature outlines the findings from small scale case studies, and there is very little literature concerning MFL as opposed to EFL or EAL. The literature available tends to focus on negative critique rather than suggesting solutions, and includes very little empirical data concerning the value of

studying MFL. This means that it is not easy to answer empirically the philosophical question of whether there is value in studying a language (Standish, 2010).

Personally, I feel disappointed with this literature since it is telling us how to teach for example. However, when value is mentioned, it tends to be seen in purely instrumental terms, and accepted as a given with no exploration of its value for being there. The available literature emphasises the instrumental value of learning MFL such as being useful for employability (European Commission, 2012), or for helping pupils to improve their English grammar (Cook, 2008).

In the next section, I will outline an approach to a study which will address an issue not mentioned in any of this literature. In order to identify inherent value in language learning, I will turn to the work of philosophers, particularly focussing on John Dewey who explores the value of certain experiences in a student's education.

Chapter 3: In Place of Methodology

Following the standard structure of a dissertation conducted using empirical research, the next chapter would most likely outline a detailed discussion of how the proposed methodology would proceed in order to address the precise questions at the heart of the study. An empirical study would proceed to situate where the research sits epistemologically in terms of the great traditions of positivism (with data collection via an experiment with a controlled group) or interpretivism (whose data might comprise a case study collecting views via open questions or in depth questionnaires). Ethical concerns would be outlined before perhaps presenting details of, and a rationale for, the sample. Results of the research would be summarised and then analysed and discussed before conclusions are drawn and recommendations made.

An empirical study on the topic of MFL might proceed by way of an assessment of good practice, or an investigation of the challenges facing those teaching or learning the subject. Equally it could attempt to measure the effectiveness of introducing MFL into the primary curriculum, or evaluate the impact of a new specification for example. However, there are certain questions in research, especially in education which cannot be answered by recourse to data. These tend to be the very broad, and enduring questions about education. We might call those questions philosophical ones. Paul Standish (2010) argues that even when we begin with the

very practical questions about education (or, in this case, MFL), that these naturally open out onto other, bigger questions. He puts it like this:

If you pursue practical questions in education far enough, as the thinking teacher is likely to find, they usually lead to 'big' questions about the nature of knowledge and the nature of the good life. These are addressed in some way or other in various aspects of educational research. But they are the kind of thing that cannot be resolved by empirical study. They need reflection and judgement and argument. This is central to philosophy (Standish, 2010: 8).

These big questions have been debated since Plato, for example in his *Republic* (Plato, 330 BC). Although Plato was concerned with the ruling classes in guardian states, Plato discussed who should be educated and how and why; he wrote: 'Academic education is reserved for the few, and for when they are older', (Plato, 330 BC: 70), and:

a young person can't tell when something is allegorical and when it isn't...that is why a very great deal of importance should be placed upon ensuring that the first stories they hear are best adapted for their moral improvement (Plato, 330 BC: 73).

In 1762, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was still trying to answer these fundamental questions of who should be educated and how in his influential text, '*Emile*'. He believed that education should be reserved for wealthy boys and based on nature, learning by interacting with one's environment, even going so far as to say that educating poor children would be damaging to them: «l'éducation nous vient de la nature, ou des hommes ou des choses»²⁰ (Rousseau, 1762: Livre 1: 76):

le pauvre n'a pas besoin d'éducation; celle de son état est forcée, il n'en saurait avoir d'autre; au contraire, l'éducation que le riche reçoit de son état

²⁰ "This education comes to us from nature or from men or from things" (Rousseau, 1979:38)

est celle qui lui convient le moins et pour lui-même et pour la société²¹
(Rousseau, 1762, Livre 1: 417)

l'éducation n'est utile qu'autant que la fortune s'accorde avec la vocation des parents; en tout autre cas elle est nuisible à l'élève²² (Rousseau, 1762, Livre 1: 157).

My study will not explore who should be educated, but will rather consider the justification of a certain *type* of education. I am considering whether MFL should be included in education for everyone.

As well as these big questions which are not empirically researchable, one feature of philosophical research remains its ability to shed light on issues relating to value and education. Standish (2010) defines a philosophical thesis as: 'centrally concerned with questions of meaning and value, with conceptual matters and with the coherence of ideas (whether they make sense, whether they are justified); quite often with some kind of struggle with ideas' (Standish, 2010: 11). Indeed, philosophy can help us to justify an activity or explain its value (Standish, 2010):

Questions of value (ie. ethics) are at the heart of education, as of other human practices. There are certain formal principles we can apply to considering these – such as consistency and coherence – but at some point questions of substantive value need to be addressed: what matters most and why? Ultimately these matters open onto the biggest questions about what is important in life (Standish, 2010: 12).

Michael Hand (2011) similarly takes up these ideas of value and justification in his work that discusses the contentious issue of whether patriotism should be championed in English schools. He concluded that it ought to be taught as a

²¹ "The poor man does not need to be educated. His station gives him a compulsory education. He could have no other. On the contrary, the education the rich man receives from his station is that which suits him least, from both his own point of view and that of society" (Rousseau, 1979: 52).

²² "Education is useful only insofar as fortune is in agreement with the parents' vocation. In any other case it is harmful to the student" (Rousseau, 1979 :41).

controversial issue. If philosophy can be brought to bear on discussions of the value of certain curricular subjects, then as well as MFL, a philosophical approach could be used to argue the value of other subjects in English schools such as citizenship, mindfulness, sex and relationships education, or the right balance of vocational subjects and academic subjects. I have similar questions, not involved with the practicalities of how to improve the teaching of MFL in school but broader philosophical questions relating to the justification for the inclusion of MFL within the secondary education.

The question remains of how to proceed with a philosophical thesis. Standish (2010) advises a detailed engagement often with other literature. He writes:

Because of its central concern with the nature of ideas a philosophical thesis is likely to draw significantly on a limited number of sources – perhaps a particular philosopher. There is unlikely to be an exhaustive literature search because very often the topic at issue is one that touches on such broad (and sometimes big) issues that one could never come to the end of it (Standish, 2010: 11).

The way this literature is used tends to be very different, engaging with the work of an author in much more detail:

It may nevertheless be very desirable to isolate an aspect of the work of an influential philosopher or educationalist, or some strand of policy or practice, with which you do *not* agree and to provide a critique of the work (perhaps with the help of a philosopher or other thinker you find more sympathetic (Standish, 2010: 11)

The work of the American philosopher and pragmatist John Dewey is relevant to this study, given his central focus on experiences in education. Dewey's work is extensive and a Master's thesis is simply too short to do justice to all his ideas.

However, his legacy is centrally concerned with education (*Democracy in Education*,

1916), (*Experience in Education*, 1938; 1997), (*The Child and the Curriculum and The School and Society*, 1966) and in Chapter 3 of *Experience in Education*, Dewey outlines some criteria for determining what kind of experience we should expose students to.

This thesis will not produce data to outline why MFL is valuable (the kind that might be elicited from teachers and pupils via interviews or questionnaires), it will rather provide a reading of Dewey's criteria of experience to shed light on the value of including MFL in the curriculum.

Chapter 4: The Turn to John Dewey

i Introduction to Dewey

Born in 1859, John Dewey is generally considered to be the most prominent American educator of the twentieth century (Apple & Teitelbaum, 2008) who was strongly influenced by his environment and the socio-political context of his time (Martin 2003). His prolific career began as a high school teacher, spanned seven decades and has continued to influence education and social reform. After writing philosophical essays which were published in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Dewey was encouraged to study further.²³

Dewey's seminal works include *The School and Society* (1899), *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), *Democracy and Education* (1916) and *Experience and Education* (1938). These promote the ideal of a democratic community which incorporates all aspects of life. Underpinning his commitment to democracy, liberalism and progressive education was Dewey's profound belief in pragmatism in which branch of philosophy the function of meaning lies in the impact a sentence, word or text has on others (Pring, 2007). The function of thought therefore should be to predict, solve

²³ He completed a doctoral dissertation on the psychology of Immanuel Kant in 1884. Whilst studying at Johns Hopkins University, he worked closely with George Sylvester Morris, a well-known advocate of German idealism, Charles Sanders Peirce - whose research with William James of Harvard founded pragmatic philosophy – and with G. Stanley Hall who promoted the need for teaching methods to be appropriate for pupils in terms of their development. After lecturing in the Universities of Michigan and Minnesota, Dewey accepted the position of Chair of Philosophy, Psychology and Pedagogy at Chicago University in 1894.

problems or act instead of to describe or represent reality. It is this for which Dewey remains most famous long after his death in 1952, aged 92, despite his many other broad interests which included aesthetics, metaphysics and art as experience.²⁴

His legacy continues to influence contemporary philosophy today. For example, Professor Naoko Saito (University of Kyoto) believes Dewey can help us to understand other cultures: 'Dewey's idea of "mutual national understanding" faces new challenges in the age of globalization, especially in education for global understanding' (Saito, 2007: 161). In her critique of neoliberalist educational policy through the lens of Renaissance humanism, Ward (University of Durham) turns to Dewey to challenge the 'terror of performativity' (Ward, 2016: 1) driving English schools. Ward considers that many of the problems apparent in contemporary schools are due to the Government's rejection of Dewey's progressive education based on personal experience, in which he promoted the ideals of independent thinking and social connectivity. She writes:

Dewey's argument that learning should take the form of a democratic moral enquiry in which children learn to take part in 'conjoint and cooperative doings'²⁵ is obviously at odds with neoliberal atomization, (Ward, 2016: 5).

Much of Dewey's work centres on his theory of human nature, and his conclusions are still being assessed based on current knowledge of mental complexity rather than the more limited understanding of psychology at the time it was written (Johnston, 2013). However, it is undoubtedly in the field of education that his thinking has been most influential. Considering Dewey's interest in the factors surrounding

²⁴ Dewey is also considered to be one of the founders of functional psychology, believing that people behave as a reaction to their environment (Dewey 1886). In his writings he championed new technology and scientific enquiry as a way to improve lives (Johnston, 2013).

²⁵ (Dewey, 1916)

social change, it is unsurprising that his legacy concerns the dissemination and application of knowledge (Carmichael, 1966).

But it is in education that the swing of the pendulum during his long and active career can be seen best, and, given his concern with the instruments of social change, it is natural that perhaps the field of his greatest continuing interest and effect should be that of transmission and use of knowledge (Carmichael, 1966: 7)

i Dewey on Education

Whilst leading the departments of philosophy and pedagogy at the University of Chicago, Dewey's responsibilities included the management of a Laboratory School. He adopted complete responsibility for the school, seeing it as a lens through which to observe the psychological and social development of its pupils. The publication of *School and Society* (1899), a series of lectures offered to parents, provoked a metamorphosis in educational philosophy, rejecting the theories of traditional pedagogy (rote, drilling, recitation) alongside more modern child-centred education as advocated by Froebel, Herbart and Pestalozzi. Dewey insisted on the analysis and separation of common associations in education, such as the child and the curriculum or the child and her social environment: 'suggesting that the way we think of the relationships between ourselves and the environment, others, and the curriculum, is at the root of our malaise' (Johnston, 2013: 105).

In *Democracy in Education* (1916), Dewey provided clear insight into his philosophy which promotes the ideal of an education for democracy. Education should be for the creation of democratic citizens; the purpose of learning being preparation to share the common life. Johnston (2013) describes Dewey's efforts as both 'negative' and 'positive' projects. His 'negative' endeavours involved rejecting regressive

tendencies in various divisions of philosophy. For example, he considered Plato's values to be too communitarian, and overly concerned with society. Similarly, he rejected what he considered the individualism evident in the work of the 18th century philosopher and writer, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In contrast, his 'positive' project involved driving philosophy: 'to help solve human or social problems, chiefly through theorizing ways to break down barriers such as class, race, geography, and gender that keep people apart', (Johnston, 2013: 103) Dewey felt that schools should play a leading role in resolving these social problems since the individual is only meaningful in society in connection with others. He hoped schools would nurture children, providing opportunities for them to explore the environment with others and make connections between what they are learning and already know. He felt children would be put off learning if faced with abstract content so advised this should be avoided unless absolutely necessary (for example, some rote learning was necessary for learning French) and reserved for later learning when it has been appropriately phased. Dewey's belief that events and the environment surrounding us provoke learning influenced the work of Malcolm Knowles and resulted in the establishment of informal education for adults.²⁶

In the last phase of Dewey's philosophical career, he developed a new philosophy of experience; individuals and their environment transact and thus transform each other: 'On the part of the person, this transaction manifests as an experience',

²⁶ Smith writes in this way about Dewey's influence on continuing and informal education, and so on Malcom Knowles: Like Dewey's conception of reflection, an event or phenomenon triggers a learning project. This is often associated with a change in life circumstances (such as retirement, child care, death of a close relative and so on). The changed circumstance provides the opportunity for learning, the way this is approached is dictated by the circumstances. Learning then progresses as 'the circumstances created in one episode become the circumstances for the next logical step' (op. cit.). Self-directed learning thus, in this view, becomes possible, when certain things cluster together to form the stimulus and the opportunity for reflection and exploration (Smith, 2002: 5).

(Johnston, 2013: 103). Dewey described the most powerful educational experiences as aesthetic. These are defined as the moment when a concept suddenly makes sense and are often not only memorable but can stimulate further learning and independent thinking. Perhaps his most well-known, and seminal work, was his 1938 text, *Experience in Education*. Here, Dewey attempted to outline practically the experiences which allow for the development of an education for democracy. It is in this work that he expands on the idea that the development of the individual and the mind is a communal process; children need initiation into the community, and education is the means to this. Hence, democracy and education are ineluctably linked.

The fact that Dewey wrote about education is not, however, the key driver for interrogating his work in relation to the value of MFL in contemporary schooling. It is rather the emphasis that he gives to a detailed discussion of *what* experiences are of value to the democratic education that he espouses. The remainder of this chapter will therefore focus on Dewey's *Experience in Education*, and in particular Chapter 3 "Criteria of Experience". Here Dewey explains first the criteria for what constitutes an experience, and second, emphasises the responsibility of educators. In the first two chapters of *Experience in Education*, Dewey compared what he described as traditional and progressive forms of education. He clarifies his views on traditional education and what he considered to be its flaws:

The main purpose or objective is to prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life... Since the subject-matter as well as standards of proper conduct are handed down from the past, the attitude of pupils must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity, and obedience, (Dewey, 1997: 18).

Dewey certainly felt that traditional education was no longer appropriate:

The traditional scheme, is in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject-matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly toward maturity. The gap is so great that the required subject-matter, the methods of learning and of behaving are so foreign to the existing capacities of the young. They are beyond the reach of the experience the young learners already possess. (Dewey, 1997: 18-19)

Despite progressive education being in essence a 'criticism' (Dewey, 1997: 18) of traditional education, simply providing the opposite conditions for learning was not necessarily the ideal: 'The problems are not even recognized, to say nothing of being solved, when it is assumed that it suffices to reject the ideas and principles of the old education and then go to the opposite extreme' (Dewey, 1997: 22).

Although Dewey agreed with many features of progressive education, its rejection of any centrally imposed authority was, he felt, causing schools to fail to provide the right environment for learning:

When external control is rejected, the problem becomes that of finding the factors of control that are inherent within experience. When external authority is rejected, it does not follow that all authority should be rejected, but rather that there is need to search for a more effective source of authority

(Dewey, 1997: 21)

This may have surprised readers at the time of writing since Dewey's earlier writings which rejected traditional education had given him the reputation of being a leading advocate of progressive education. Dewey was still in favour of some aspects of the progressive movement as more democratic: 'one thing which has recommended the progressive movement is that it seems more in accord with the democratic idea to which our people is committed than do the procedures of the traditional school'

(Dewey, 1997: 33)

So, the next question for Dewey is, if neither the progressive nor traditional methods of pedagogy are suitable, what kind of education is an appropriate one? What theory as educators do we need? In Chapter 2, Dewey highlights the need for a theory of experience. He believes that education and personal experience are organically connected (Dewey, 1997) but emphasises that not all experiences benefit education:

The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience.

(Dewey, 1997: 25)

It is important to reflect on the kind of experiences which are valuable in education. This leads to a detailed discussion in chapter 3 where Dewey identifies two criteria for assessing the quality of an experience, and so what kinds of experience are justified, and of value. These criteria for experience are therefore key to the central issue with which this research is concerned, and will now be discussed.

iii Criterion of Continuity

To begin, it is important to explore what Dewey actually means by continuity. Does he assume the same meaning as the dictionary definition: 'the unbroken and consistent existence or operation of something'? (Pearsall, 1999: 308) Arguably, this is not the case. Dewey would of course acknowledge that the things we experience in education and build on are previous experiences: 'there is *some* kind of continuity in every case' (Dewey, 1997: 35). This clearly links to the theory of constructivism, Piaget's 1953 theory which develops Kant's claim that 'we actively construct what we learn' (Winch & Gingell, 2008: 39). We can draw parallels with this theory if we

unpick the process of learning to read, for example. First, we need to learn the sounds each letter makes, then we blend them, then we learn how punctuation links these words and only then can we read novels. Another example of cognitive constructivism could be learning to paint; first we learn how to hold the brush, then how to control it, how to mix colours, how to apply colour and when to use shading and so on. But there is something distinctive about Dewey's understanding of continuity as he argues that mere continuity is not enough. His particular take on continuity is linked with growth: 'Growth, or growing as developing, not only physically but intellectually and morally, is one exemplification of the principle of continuity' (Dewey, 1997: 36).

However, Dewey is aware that not all growth is helpful. The two examples he gives where permanent growth and continuity are not good are those of corrupt politicians and a burglar; as they practise their art and develop more sophisticated technique, they may definitely grow in terms of efficiency but certainly not in moral terms. Since not all continuity in terms simply of growth is good, it is essential that we are able to distinguish between positive and negative continuity: 'only when development in a particular line conduces to continuing growth does it answer to the criterion of education as growing' (Dewey, 1997: 36). Dewey suggests that growth in some ways ultimately prevents growth in new directions. If we look at the example of a burglar, developing his art leads to social exclusion working mostly at night and away from society. There are obviously huge implications for the rest of his life if he is caught, including the likelihood of restricted work opportunities for the remainder of his career. These kind of closing down experiences are mis-educative. The opposite of this kind of closing down of opportunity is the kind of continuity that leads to the opening up of new environments; growth which leads to growth.

Dewey describes the educative experiences of continuity. He applies the category of continuity as an experiential continuum to discriminate between experiences that are educationally worthwhile or not and uses learning to speak and read as examples to illustrate this:

every experience influences in some degree the objective conditions under which further experiences are had. For example, a child who learns to speak has a new facility and new desire... When he learns to read, he similarly opens up a new environment (Dewey, 1997: 37).

Dewey believed that every experience modifies the person who has been subject to it and, at the same time, this modification affects the quality of subsequent experiences.

There is something really important about this principle of continuity for education; that even some worthwhile educative experiences which have the potential to lead to the growth that Dewey advocates can actually stunt the learner and limit them: 'to leave a person arrested on a low plane of development, in a way which limits later capacity for growth' (Dewey, 1997: 37 – 38). One example of experiences that have the tendency to limit growth are seen in the kind of current approaches to MFL controlled assessments²⁷ at GCSE which emphasise memorising techniques and communicating pre-learnt phrases. These are privileged at the expense of rewarding an understanding of grammar which would enable pupils to use the language independently and spontaneously, and provide a solid foundation for further study at Advanced level and beyond. Another example might include an emphasis on

²⁷ Controlled assessments replaced coursework in GCSE examinations from 2011 and are used in MFL as the way to measure performance in Writing and Speaking instead of a summative examination. Candidates submit two pieces of work which have been completed at some point during the course for each of these skills. Writing and Speaking currently both count for 30% of the overall GCSE grade.

acquisition of vocabulary without grammar. Pupils may know lots of words and this knowledge can easily be assessed but when using the language for a meaningful purpose, such as when travelling abroad or listening to a native speaker, the pupils will find that speakers of the language will not restrict their speech to the words they are familiar with. Indeed this vocabulary could even be masked amongst a range of unfamiliar words and cause pupils to feel disorientated, especially since without grammar they will not be able to independently compose phrases and communicate effectively. In an age of digital technology when pupils are rarely without access to a device which can translate individual words, it is even more important that MFL teachers focus on grammar as this is the tool which would open up a new experience and enable capacity for growth.

However, the real challenge to education which I will discuss in more detail within the final chapter, is to think about education in the way Dewey advocates, providing the opposite kinds of experience to those which impede learning. In 1938 Dewey already identifies the direction the learning experience is heading; towards teachers knowing their pupils, and pupils being actively involved in their progress:

On the other hand, if an experience arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense to carry a person over dead places in the future, continuity works in a very different way. Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into. (Dewey, 1997: 38)

This quotation is extremely rich. In my final chapter I will explore it in more detail, suggesting the kind of approaches to teaching and learning MFL that would provide this experience that Dewey espouses.

iv *Criterion of Interaction*

Dewey begins an exploration of his second criterion of experience, interaction, by claiming that 'all human experience is ultimately social: that it involves contact and communication' (Dewey, 1997: 38). This leads him onto a discussion about the importance of interaction: 'experience does not occur in a vacuum' (Dewey, 1997: 40). Interaction is not simply where two people meet and talk to each other. A dictionary definition interprets interaction as: 'reciprocal action or influence' (Pearsall, 1999:736). Dewey does not dismiss this definition but, in this chapter, he is using interaction in a particular way: not only to refer to the interaction of two people, but also the interaction of objective and internal conditions: 'Any normal experience is an interplay of these two sets of conditions. Taken together, or in their interaction, they form what we call a *situation*' (Dewey, 1997: 42) Dewey illustrates this using the example of a mother feeding her baby, the internal conditions being represented by the baby and external conditions by the mother; where these come together defines this interaction.

Education thus needs, according to Dewey, interaction between objective conditions (the teacher) and internal conditions (the pupils). True interaction, the kind of experiences an education system should be ensuring that pupils have, are ones where there is an interaction between the needs of the teacher, but which also takes into account the needs of the pupils. An education does not revolve solely around external conditions, such as having fun or even learning particular information in order to pass an examination. Only when these two conditions interact can we encounter a proper experience in education.

Dewey's example of the mother and baby may be used to further explain what Dewey means by interaction. Babies lack independence and have many needs, such as sleep, warmth, comfort and safety. A mother needs to respond to the needs of her baby and balance this with advice from experts and her own needs:

The wise mother takes account of the needs of the infant but not in a way which dispenses with her own responsibility for regulating the objective conditions under which the needs are satisfied...she draws upon past experiences of experts as well as her own for the light that these shed upon what experiences are in general most conducive to the normal development of infants (Dewey, 1997: 41-42)

Another example of this could be the toddler who requires a different kind of nourishment to the sweets he requests. This need for both the objective and internal conditions is like a form of transaction in education; both parties must bring something: 'An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment' (Dewey, 1997: 43) Put simply, it is not enough for the teacher to be an expert teacher. If the pupils are not at all motivated, their learning will be hampered.

v *The Role of the Educator and the Student in Determining Experience*

Dewey's analysis in *Experience and Education* is not purely theoretical, outlining what education should be about. He provides clear indications of how this should work. This is illustrated most clearly in the discussions towards the end of Chapter 3 on the responsibility of educators and students: 'Responsibility for selecting objective conditions carries with it, then, the responsibility for understanding the needs and capacities of the individuals who are learning at a given time' (Dewey, 1997: 45).

In terms of the responsibilities of educators, first it is about understanding the needs and capabilities of students; a teacher needs to get to know these before teaching:

it is not enough that certain materials and methods have proved effective with other individuals at other times. There must be a reason for thinking that they will function in generating an experience that has educative quality with particular individuals at a particular time (Dewey, 1997: 46)

Dewey highlights the importance of differentiation in order to support pupils' individual needs:

It is no reflection upon the nutritive quality of beefsteak that it is not fed to infants. It is not an individuous reflection upon trigonometry that we do not teach it in the first or fifth grade of school'...'Failure to take into account adaptation to the needs and capacities of individuals...may cause an experience to be non-educative quite as much as failure of an individual to adapt himself to the material (Dewey, 1997: 46-47).

Learning subject matter in isolation was criticised by Dewey as this becomes disconnected from the rest of the experience:

the subjects were not actually learned, for they were learned at least sufficiently to enable a pupil to pass examinations in them. One trouble is that the subject-matter in question was learned in isolation; it was put, as it were, in a water-tight compartment...it was segregated when it was acquired and hence it is so disconnected from the rest of the experience that it is not available under the actual conditions of life (Dewey, 1997: 47-48)

Rather, Dewey feels it is the responsibility of an educator to provide a holistic approach to learning. This theory seems perhaps rather idealistic and at odds with current neoliberal accountability in English schools, where limited curriculum time and international comparison of results encourages teachers to focus on equipping pupils with strategies to do well in examinations and a holistic approach could even be seen as bad practice. A relevant example related to MFL lessons could be focussing on oral communication without reading or writing in the target language or

the learning of vocabulary to the detriment of understanding grammar so this language cannot really be applied by pupils independently in a meaningful way. Indeed, simply learning a language without highlighting its broader socio-political context illustrates this; if we do not explicitly discuss this with pupils we cannot expect them to be aware of the benefits of learning the language.

Collateral learning and how our educational experience can influence other subjects is emphasised by Dewey since: 'The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning' (Dewey, 1997: 48). Teachers must be mindful as to whether subject-matter will be useful for the future. Dewey reminds us that: 'when preparation is made the controlling end, potentialities of the present are sacrificed to a suppositious future' (Dewey, 1997:49) as was the case in what he termed traditional schools:

All this means that attentive care must be devoted to the conditions which give each present experience a worthwhile meaning (Dewey, 1997:49)

In addition, Dewey reminds the reader of the influence of physical surroundings and environment on pupils' learning:

A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by envioning conditions, but that they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth. Above all, they should know how to utilize the surrounding, physical and social, that exist so as to extract from them all that they have to contribute to building up experiences that are worthwhile (Dewey, 1997:40)

The fact that most of Dewey's reflections in *Experience and Education* concern the educator instead of the pupils evokes the question of whether the pupil is absent from Dewey's discussions, and indeed whether Dewey is actually interested in the

student. However, he discusses this elsewhere, explaining this more in *Democracy and Education*:

Only by wrestling with the conditions of problem at first hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does he think. When the parent or teacher has provided the conditions which stimulate thinking and has taken a sympathetic attitude toward the activities of the learner by entering into a common or conjoint experience, all has been done which a second party can do to instigate learning. The rest lies with the one directly concerned. If he cannot devise his own solution (not of course in isolation, but in correspondence with the teacher and other pupils) and find his own way out he will not learn, not even if he can recite some correct answer with one hundred per cent accuracy...the teacher is a learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, a teacher - and upon the whole, the less consciousness there is, on either side, of either giving or receiving instruction, the better (Dewey, 1916: 160).

Dewey's advice on the relationship between teacher and student is blatantly clear, if we encourage over-reliance on the teacher, this will damage a pupil's education.

Dewey's work, then, can be seen to be highly relevant to a discussion of the *value* of certain experiences in education. In particular, his discussion of the criteria for experience, most fully expounded in chapter 3 of *Experience and Education*, is of significant import in evaluating the value not only of particular approaches to teaching and learning in a given subject, but to the more intrinsic value of the subject in itself. These discussions go beyond the reporting of instrumental value which abound the literature. In the final chapter that now follows, Dewey's criteria for experience that have been described here are re-visited in order to make a strong case for the value of MFL teaching in contemporary secondary schools, and to suggest how policy makers, institutions and teachers might take on board Dewey's ideas.

Chapter 5: How does Dewey help us to understand the value of studying MFL?

As a philosopher writing about the value of particular kinds of experience in education, there are many pedagogical lessons to be learnt from this study of Dewey which can help us to understand the value of studying MFL, a subject often perceived as difficult whose intrinsic value is rarely the subject of research or media coverage. I found it really interesting that, in his introduction to Dewey's *The Child and the Curriculum* and *The School and Society*, Carmichael (1966: 9) highlights the need for 'adequate' instruction of MFL alongside Mathematics in order to develop intellect and intelligence in line with Dewey's vision.

"Hard" subjects of this sort are good academic aptitude tests. Their mastery requires the acquisition of habits of intellectual diligence. Real facility in the use of language and symbols today is recognized as playing a special part in many subtle and important mental processes. Adequate training in language and the operations of mathematics is now seen – possibly uniquely – to foster the creation in the individual of flexible and effective intellectual powers (Carmichael, 1966: 9)

Fifty years on, so much has changed in education in the UK with the introduction of many new subjects and the predominance of comprehensive schools and GCSE qualifications as opposed to selection from the age of eleven and different examinations depending on pupils' ability (O Level, 16 plus, CSE) (Tickle, 2012). Despite the Conservative government's much publicised plans for curriculum reform intending to return to the consistent vigour of former O Level examinations (Tickle, 2012), Mathematics remains a priority but the National Curriculum since its

introduction in 1988, does not include MFL with English, Mathematics and Science amongst its *core* subjects²⁸: ‘compulsory throughout each key stage in the National Curriculum’ (Collins, 2016). My earlier study of the available literature concerning the teaching and learning of MFL clearly recognises obvious challenges regarding the value of MFL study and I will attempt to explore how we might apply Dewey’s thinking to propose ways forward. Although the majority of Dewey’s recommendations in *Experience and Education* concern the role of the educator, I feel that there is a limit to the impact individual teachers can make on the overall situation of MFL in English schools and universities. For this reason, I feel it is important to outline how Dewey’s thinking could be applied to educational policy and institutions as well as educators to promote the value of learning MFL.

i Factors concerning policy

Dabène (1997) reminds us of the influence that the status of a language may have on students’ motivation and perceptions of the subject: ‘Le statut d’une langue a un effet direct sur les attentes et les attitudes des apprenants, et par conséquent sur leurs conduites d’apprentissage’²⁹ Dabène, 1997: 22). Dewey’s concluding words in *Experience and Education* emphasise the need for *experience* to be considered: ‘in order that education may be a reality and not a name or a slogan. It is for this reason that I have emphasized the need for a sound ‘philosophy of experience’, (Dewey, 1997, p. 91). If pupils continue not to realise the value of a subject, despite their teacher’s efforts, we need to look at the broader issues of how this subject is

²⁸ English, Maths and Science are the core subjects which are compulsory in England from the age of 5 to 16.

²⁹ A language’s status has a direct impact on learners’ expectations and attitudes and consequently on their learning behaviour (translated by Lisa Madden, 2016).

perceived within the institution and beyond, considering wider societal attitudes towards MFL and whether changes to policy can improve the situation.

In his 2010 comparative study of attitudes to MFL learning, Bartram laments Anglo-centric attitudes regarding culture and relevance which prevail:

OFSTED has also criticized the 'uninteresting and irrelevant syllabuses' (Ward, 2004:1) that dominate English MFL curricula and has blamed these for the increase in the number of schools deciding to remove languages from the core curriculum at Key Stage Four in response to perceived dissatisfaction amongst pupils (Bartram, 2010: 61)

Coleman *et al.* (2007) blame the lack of instrumental motivation towards MFL on the status of English as the predominant language of 'tourism, academic and business communication and youth culture' (Coleman *et al.*, 2007: 253). Authors such as Vasseur and Grandcolas (1997: 221) simply state that MFL are rarely heard in England: 'en Angleterre on entend rarement parler d'autres langues sauf si on habite une region avec une forte population d'émigrés'.³⁰

Maun (2006) and Grenfell (2000) provide specific examples of pupils' lack of inspiration from existing MFL specifications:

Today's GCSE students are 16 years old. They have passed the age of sexual consent, they can marry with the permission of their parents, some are already parents. And what is a GCSE exam board's idea of an appropriate coursework topic? 'My ideal school uniform.' (Maun, 2006:32)

Pupils order meals they are not going to eat, plan journeys they are not going to make...There is often little of themselves, of their own worlds in much that passes in the name of communicative language teaching these days (Grenfell, 2000: 24)

³⁰ Other languages are rarely heard in England except if you live in an area with a large population of immigrants (translated by Lisa Madden).

When put like this, it seems hardly surprising that English pupils are questioning the purpose of studying MFL since they believe it is linked neither to their interests nor future aspirations (Bartram, 2010). Dewey however goes against these pupils' attitude, emphasising that: 'education opens up a new environment', (Dewey, 1997: 37); learning opens up possibilities. Dewey's criteria of continuity which he believed was central to the learning process emphasised the need to consider the future in every stage of the educational process. This is supported by Ofsted's 2014 subject-specific guidance for MFL where the following statement featured in criteria for a judgement of 'Good' concerning 'Overall effectiveness of ML education provided by the schools:

Pupils and particular groups of pupils have highly positive educational experiences in modern languages that ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment (Ofsted, 2014: 3)

Dewey emphasised that valuable experience does not necessarily equate instant gratification since the value of experience may only be realised when reviewed later. He recommended that educators: 'arrange for the kind of experiences which, while they do not repel the student, but rather engage his activities are, more than immediately enjoyable' (Dewey, 1997: 27).

As well as ensuring specifications are more closely related to youth culture, an interesting example of how Dewey's reason could be applied to MFL would be for leading UK educational agencies to support and promote CLIL consistently from the current small scale experiment supported by (Coyle *et al.*, 2007) to general practice. This would involve other subjects being taught through the medium of a different language. A smaller scale exemplification of this could include a far greater emphasis on cross-curricular teaching. It has always amazed me that whilst cross-

curricular education is *de rigueur* in English primary schools, secondary education is compartmentalised within separate subjects. Bartram (2010) argues the case for integrating MFL into the curriculum, emphasising that for teenagers, wider social attitudes and peer influence have more influence than classroom practice. The revised KS2 and KS3 NC would facilitate CLIL and cross-curricular approaches since the restrictions of imposed curricula and the accountability of levels have been removed. This would highlight what for many pupils is the real purpose of MFL; the importance of communication which links nicely with Dewey's belief: 'all human experience is ultimately social: that it involves contact and communication' (Dewey, 1997: 38). A relevant exemplification of a cross-curricular theme springs to mind; the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and Belgium³¹. Much could be gained by teachers from different subject areas planning collaboratively how we could teach about this. Obvious examples of subjects which could easily work together on this include Geography, History, Psychology, RE and Citizenship alongside French.

My understanding of Dewey's philosophy goes so far as to state that, were he alive today, he would recommend a cross-curricular approach beyond KS3 which would encompass a radical overhaul of assessment practice in schools. I imagine that he would suggest replacing individual subject examinations with cross-curricular projects, planned collaboratively and encompassing a wide breadth of skills. Since Dewey advocated education as an opportunity for children to explore their environment with others and make connections between their prior knowledge and

³¹ On 13 November 2015 there were several gun and bomb terrorist attacks in Paris, killing 130 people. Following the pursuit of some key suspects in Belgium, bomb blasts occurred in Brussels airport and Maelbeek underground station, killing 32 people on 22 March 2016. The jihadist group, Islamic State (IS) has claimed responsibility for these attacks.

what they are learning, this could provide a more suitable learning experience to equip children for the future.

The first chapter of *Experience and Education*, where Dewey compares the radically opposing traditional and progressive education prevalent in America during his career, draws parallels with the revised (DfE, 2013) and previous (QCA, 2007) KS3 NC for MFL. Dewey illustrates their respective contrasts with freedom replacing imposed content resulting in direction opening the door to creativity (Dewey, 1997: 19-20). Dewey does emphasise however that the problems existing within education cannot be recognised, never mind solved, if we attempt to simply reject the old ideas and go to the opposite extreme (Dewey, 1997: 22). It is for this reason that I believe it is essential that we look to the example of other European countries who have successfully introduced models of bilingual education which promote IU and are generally perceived to produce students with more positive attitudes towards MFL (Chambers, 1999). This will prove that Dewey's advice should not be considered utopian or radical since it is already in place in other countries. A wider exploration of this suggestion could even lead to the philosophical question of whether MFL should continue to be taught as a discrete subject.

As I have already highlighted in my examination of the available literature, there are many good ideas and examples of exemplary practice currently being shared in MFL conferences, publications and fora. The work of the British Council continues to inspire and motivate MFL teachers to establish international links and develop cross-curricular initiatives with support and funding from its subsidiary partners such as Erasmus+, E Twinning and Comenius, but I strongly feel that significantly increased awareness and access to advice on implementation is essential for these to be able

to have a wider impact. Funding and support for MFL development has been dramatically reduced since the closure of NCL³² in 2011 and the Coalition government's 2010 decision to abolish specialist schools including language colleges which provided valuable outreach work offering MFL support to neighbouring schools and the local community (Bartram, 2010).

English has evolved as the language of the internet, trade and commerce and international politics, but this conflicts with the growing multicultural and multilingual society currently developing in English towns and cities. Bartram (2010) compares the situation of Germany and Holland with England. The German Ministry of Education emulates best practice by promoting multilingualism and 'specifies that 24 per cent of teaching time should be allocated to MFLs for thirteen-year olds' (Eurydice, 2005); the age that over half of English pupils currently choose to end their MFL study:

Das Lernziel der Zukunft ist dabei auf Mehrsprachigkeit. Grundsätzlich sollten möglichst viele Schüler zwei Fremdsprachen lernen, und für höherwertige Abschlüsse sollten die Anreize und Möglichkeiten verstärkt werden, drei und gegebenenfalls noch mehr Fremdsprachen zu lernen³³ (Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der BRD, 1994: 3)

³² The National Centre for Languages was established in 2003 from the amalgamation of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research and the Languages National Training Organisation as part of the Government's National Languages Strategy. Its functions included managing national initiatives in support of language capability, the implementation of the National Strategy and also provided a wide range of services for teachers, learners and researchers.

³³ The learning objective of the future points towards multilingualism. As many pupils as absolutely possible should study two foreign languages, and for higher level courses, opportunities for studying three or more foreign languages should be maximised and incentivised (translated from the original 1994 conference papers of the office of regional Educational Ministers by Lisa Madden, 2016)

ii Factors concerning institutions

Phillips and Filmer-Sankey (1993) point out that the majority of research investigating attitudes to MFL focuses on 'languages in general, rather than on the differences between pupils' attitudes towards various languages' Phillips & Filmer-Sankey, 1993: 59). This is a really relevant point since French has become significantly less popular in Dutch and German schools while English continues to grow in popularity (Bartram, 2010). I feel it is important to mention that, in comparison with the situation of MFL in England, French in Germany and Holland is relatively healthy; their pupils are likely to be exposed to more French since they share a geographical border with France making international travel much more affordable. In his 2010 research, Bartram cites lack of parental support, the invisibility of MFL in the media and widespread negative attitudes towards target language countries when he talks of: 'unfulfilled instrumental and low integrative attitudes many of the English pupils reveal towards French and German' (Bartram, 2010: 178). Contrastingly, his findings suggest that German and Dutch pupils are more satisfied with their MFL curriculum which is based on broader cultural aspects of language learning (Bartram, 2010), citing youth culture, technology and commerce as reasons for the continued rise in popularity of English in Germany and Holland. Currently many English schools are phasing out the teaching of German, either replacing it with Spanish (which is presumed to be more useful for future holidays) or only offering one language to KS3 pupils, usually French (Board & Tinsley, 2015); thus narrowing the MFL experience of their pupils. These decisions about language provision are made predominantly without consultation with pupils, parents, feeder primaries or external bodies and few schools offer a wider range of languages such

as Japanese, Mandarin, Arabic or Russian which could be really useful for careers in engineering or trade (Board & Tinsley, 2015: 124)³⁴. In my opinion, if schools decide to alter their MFL provision it is really important to consider carefully the views of the wider community to ensure the right decisions are made to help students prepare for their future since Dewey stresses the influence of school experience on pupils' future:

every experience affects for better or worse the attitudes which help decide the quality of further experiences, by setting up certain preference and aversion and making it easier or harder to act for this or that end (Dewey, 1997: 37)

Bartram's 2010 research revealed that the possibility of accommodating pupils' choices in terms of which language they study would be the single most effective action to improve English pupils' attitudes to MFL and address: 'the more negative peer culture surrounding MFLs at the English schools' (Bartram, 2010: 184). Taster classes could provide pupils with valuable insight into the language before making choices.

Additionally, there is increasing evidence of teachers being pressurised into teaching a language they are not qualified in (Board & Tinsley, 2015). In his 2015 review of initial teacher training (ITE), Sir Andrew Carter stresses the importance of teacher subject knowledge in his 2015 report to the DfE³⁵. He identifies shortage subjects, such as MFL as facing 'particular challenges – in some cases, trainees may be training in a subject that they did not study directly or exclusively at degree level'

³⁴ Board & Tinsley's 2015 Languages Trends report is based on the findings of a survey circulated to schools. 648 primary schools, 529 state secondary schools and 128 independent secondary schools responded to the survey. The provision of these lesser taught languages was significantly higher in independent schools.

³⁵ Government Department for Education

(Carter, 2015: 26): Paton (2012) reinforces that MFL has a higher proportion of professionals teaching outside their specialism:

Numbers are particularly high in foreign languages, with a quarter of French teachers, a third of German teachers and more than half of those teaching Spanish failing to hold a relevant degree (Paton, 2012).

In his educational writings, Dewey emphasises that teachers must be passionate about their subject and continue to study. In their longitudinal study investigating motivation and why students choose to study German, Busse and Williams (2010) found that enjoyment is a crucial factor influencing pupils' choices and this is largely attributed to the experience and connection they had with the target language countries (TLC) and the teacher. Interestingly, external pressure was not mentioned as a factor influencing any students' decision to study German and lack of enjoyment was cited as the main reason for students to not choose MFL. I must stress the importance of institutions being aware of pupils' views and engaging in research about how pupils learn if they wish to address the situation of MFL.

In their recent survey of KS3 provision, Ofsted (2015) emphasises the consequences of schools prioritising examination classes & how this can hamper pupils' experience in KS3. I would like to demonstrate two examples of how this could have a negative influence on pupils' MFL lessons. Timetabling restrictions manifest themselves in secondary schools reserving the timetabling of KS3 until the older KS4 and post-16 *examination* classes have been staffed. The impact this has on KS3 pupils' experience of learning MFL is highlighted as a weakness by Ofsted (2015):

The weaknesses in teaching and pupil progress identified by inspectors reflect **the lack of priority given to Key Stage 3 by many secondary school leaders**. The majority of leaders spoken to as part of this survey said that they **staffed Key Stages 4 and 5 before Key Stage 3**. As a result, some Key

Stage 3 classes were split between more than one teacher or were taught by non-specialists.³⁶ (Ofsted, 2015: 5)

This means that split classes & non-specialist teachers feature heavily in KS3. A lack of continuity caused by teachers sharing a group is unlikely to enhance the learning experience for students. Teachers who share classes are likely to do so because they teach part time or have other commitments such as leadership responsibility and will have limited opportunities for collaborative planning. This means they are likely to divide the curriculum in a way that minimises the need for them to liaise in terms of practicality rather than prioritising learning from the pupil's perspective as Dewey would advise. In his explanation of the criteria of continuity on page 47, Dewey stresses the need to consider the future in every stage of the educational process. Institutions finding themselves consistently falling into this trap are acting in response to many external factors such as budget constraints and could perceive Dewey's recommendations as idealistic or utopian. However, when an external body such as Ofsted (whose purpose is to judge schools comparatively and publish the results) highlights an issue, this is likely to be prioritised. Such schools may wish to consider another issue which shared classes expose; that of reduced accountability to professionals.

Ofsted (2015) also highlighted concerns that schools are not building on KS2 prior learning sufficiently:

The status of Key Stage 3 as the poor relation to other key stages was exemplified in the way schools monitored and assessed pupils' progress. Inspectors found that **too many secondary schools did not work effectively with partner primary schools to understand pupils' prior**

³⁶ A non-specialist teacher has not studied this subject either as part of their undergraduate degree or post-graduate teacher training qualification.

learning and ensure that they built on this during Key Stage 3.

Worryingly, some secondary leaders simply accepted that pupils would repeat what they had already done in primary school during the early part of Key Stage 3, particularly in Year 7 (Ofsted, 2015: 5)

Ofsted observed MFL KS3 lessons in 51 routine inspections during summer 2015 and exposed 'significant weaknesses' (Ofsted, 2015: 5), including teaching that 'failed to challenge and engage pupils' (Ofsted, 2015: 5) and behaviour management issues due to low level disruption. Interestingly, their published collection of KS3 good practice case studies (Ofsted 2015a) does not include any suggestions for improving the MFL learning experience. I wonder if this is due to the shortage of MFL teachers or the perceived greater importance of other issues highlighted in this report such as using pupil premium funding efficiently to close identified gaps in KS3, raising levels of numeracy and ensuring homework consolidates and extends learning (Ofsted, 2015). The philosophical concept of constructivism identifies that when a child learns something, they are building this new knowledge on the basis of what they already know (Winch & Gingell, 2008). When explaining his criteria of experience, Dewey reminds us of the importance of understanding the needs and capabilities of pupils. Our relationship with pupils and knowledge of them and how we can acknowledge their prior knowledge is paramount.

In their précis of Dewey's contribution to education, Apple & Teitelbaum (2008) remind us how the student experience for Dewey was paramount, based on his observations from leading the Laboratory School in Chicago over a hundred years ago:

Dewey severely criticised public schools for silencing or ignoring student interests and experiences, using artificial language (perhaps about some vague feature) that only served to alienate students, over-relying on testing to assess student learning, differentiating students according to their presumed

ability to partake in mental or manual learning instead of offering both to all, and isolating subjects from one another instead of uniting them around students' lived experience with knowledge. Rather than blaming students for their passivity, Dewey focused attention directly on the pedagogy of schools (Apple & Teitelbaum, 2008:180)

Perhaps Dewey's lack of fear of openly criticising general practice in the schools of his time is a reason why his ideas never really permeated American classrooms (Apple & Teitelbaum, 2008). Instead of appearing dated, the 21st century reader can learn much from Dewey's advice. However, there are clear contradictions with Ofsted's 2015 recommendations which identify particular weaknesses in the teaching of MFL and advocate more robust systems for assessing pupils and monitoring their progress, whereas Dewey recommends a more flexible curriculum and assessment process to enable pupils to make connections with what they have learnt and how this can be applied in the future which he feels is ultimately more motivating for pupils. Research by Macaro *et al.* (2016) has revealed that research is perceived negatively by practising teachers: 'When research evidence is unable to provide such instant solutions, teachers may reject it as having nothing useful to contribute to their everyday practice' (Macaro *et al.* 2016: 130). For this reason, I strongly recommend advocating that teachers look towards philosophy, in particular that of Dewey, in their attempt to remedy some of the current issues surrounding MFL. As something radically different to the academic research they are rejecting, it is therefore likely to have increased impact and since philosophy advocates discussion and collaborative working, the potential benefits for institutions are obvious.

A key feature of current examination specifications is that this dictates lesson content. Students do not respond well to curricular imposition as there may be little correlation between this and their personal interests (Bartram, 2010).

According to Dewey, there is value in study if it arouses curiosity and leads to increased initiative. Dewey believed each experience influences later experiences. He outlined three criteria of experience which will carry learning forward (Fulford, 2015). Firstly, learning should 'arouse curiosity', secondly, 'strengthen initiative', and thirdly, education 'should set up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense' (Dewey, 1997: 38). My interpretation of how this could be applied to MFL follows; curiosity would be aroused as I have already suggested by maximising links with other subjects, considering pupils' interests and engaging pupils with smart use of technology; a strengthening of initiative would encourage pupil independence from their teacher (this will be explored further in the next section) and promoting the value and relevance of MFL would encourage pupils to invest commitment to learning MFL. Ofsted's 2014 criteria for a *good* judgement regarding pupils' achievement in MFL is in line with Dewey's views:

'...pupils often take the initiative in their work...they demonstrate some originality, imagination or creativity in modern languages work'...'they have good knowledge and understanding of the culture of the countries where the language is spoken. Pupils enjoy learning languages and can explain the value of doing so' (Ofsted, 2014: 4)

Institutions who may feel reluctant to look towards Dewey for advice concerning the future of education, questioning the relevance, should be reminding that in criteria to be judged as 'Good' for *quality* of teaching in MFL, Ofsted stipulate: 'Teachers communicate the value of modern languages very effectively' (Ofsted, 2014: 6).

iii Factors concerning professionals

It is important to highlight the relevance of the reason why Dewey concentrates his recommendations for the attention of individual teachers. At the time of his writing, educators had far greater autonomy than current practice of published comparison of performance allows. For this reason I have recommended that Dewey's philosophy is equally valuable for policy-makers and institutions.

In Chapter 3 of *Experience and Education*, Dewey is reminding us of the key principles which should underpin our practice. Stables & Wikeley's 1999 study of the decline in attitudes to languages which cited French and German as the least enjoyed subjects was written during what is nostalgically viewed as the golden era of MFL by long-serving teachers during the Languages for All policy. The key findings were that pupils failed to see the value of the subject. Research by Bartram (2010) and Gardner (1985) certainly surmises that compulsory MFL led to failure and poor attitudes. Given that this was at a time of considerable investment in MFL by the Government, it seems entirely appropriate to investigate an alternative approach and hence I turn to Dewey to suggest a way forward. Dewey acts as a mirror to reflect the problems in MFL. Instead of answering questions by providing empirical data, he makes us think about what is happening and offers some suggestions of how to improve.

I have already provided extensive examples of Dewey's recommendations from *Experience and Education* in Chapter 4 but feel there are further lessons to be interpreted from this with regard to accentuating the value of MFL study. Returning to some previous suggestions I have made, it is important to stress that educators must not ignore the difficulties of taking on Dewey's ideas. We need to consider the kind of

educational experience we are providing for our students if we allow them merely to regurgitate text in order to achieve a certain grade yet on achieving this benchmark grade, the pupil is unable to use the language 'spontaneously' or 'independently', never mind 'creatively' (Ofsted, 2014: 4). In order to motivate and engage KS3 learners, encouraging them to opt for GCSE MFL, we may be tempted to ignore difficult concepts such as mastery of tense formation in favour of playing lots of games and relying on the internet and interactive digital resources to emphasise that MFL can be lots of fun, particularly now specific content has been removed from KS3 Programmes of Study in MFL:

We speak of spoiling a child and of the spoilt child. The effect of over-indulging a child is a continuing one (Dewey, 1997: 37).

I have already mentioned how a parent needs to find a balance between care and over-indulgence but this advice could easily also apply to MFL teachers reluctant to cover the challenging concepts and structures which need to be mastered in order to use language independently; we must not pander to the students' wants and desires. This can apply on different levels, such as ignoring grammar; avoiding listening exercises which require additional resources, the need for silence and are perceived as difficult by pupils; or pacifying a potentially volatile class with lots of fun, ICT activities which provide ultimately a passive language learning experience for pupils instead of encouraging them to interact with each other and use the target language which forces them out of their comfort zone.

Dewey advises that 'connectedness in growth' needs to be a teacher's priority (Dewey, 1997: 75). For this reason it is imperative that teachers work collaboratively with pupils to facilitate their learning and assist pupils in actively making connections

with what they are learning in relation to what they already know. Teachers should continue to learn themselves and must also ensure clear explanations, highlighting the wider benefits of learning MFL in varied, engaging lessons where pupils have the opportunity to use the language for meaningful purposes. In KS3 the freedom of prescribed content opens up so many opportunities. Alongside cross-curricular projects within institutions, Dewey's advice could apply to collaborative work with overseas partner schools for example, providing physical and electronic links with target language countries and should not be a rare event. Teachers can arrange for example for classes to be broadcast via video-conferencing, with opportunities for pupils to communicate with their peers in the wider French or Spanish speaking world regarding a geographical or historical topic they are studying, not necessarily mainland France or Spain! Clips and tweets can be shared via blogs and virtual learning environments with the opportunity for peer review and feedback as homework. These are just a couple of examples of possible ways to interpret Dewey's recommendations and it is important to stress that there is a wealth of literature available and the professional subject association ALL³⁷ provides practical advice and strategies advancing public understanding of good practice in MFL for those who wish to explore this in more detail. Alongside its website and recommended publications, the organisation uses social media to promote improved standards of language teaching, raise awareness of training opportunities and webinars and represent the public voice on behalf of members (ALL, 2016).

It will be important for MFL teachers to consult such advice when considering *what* kind of teaching 'arouses curiosity' and 'strengthens initiative' in line with Dewey's

³⁷ The Association for Language Learning (ALL) is the UK's leading organisation for those involved in the teaching of languages at all levels. There are currently 4,500 members (ALL, 2016).

advice which I have already referred to (Dewey, 1997: 38) Put simply, if we simply have all the stages of learning a language without the glue holding them together, pupils will not be able to use the language themselves to communicate effectively. This message is important at all levels of language learning. I have already given the example of early language learning where grammar may be omitted in favour of vocabulary and GCSE where chunks of text and set phrases often replace creativity and independent writing since lesson time must focus on ensuring all the specification has been covered whilst providing sufficient preparation for examinations. In my role as teacher educator, I encounter graduates of some MFL undergraduate courses which favour fluency without accuracy or mastery of grammar. Noels' study (2001) reveals that students who have chosen to study a language because they enjoy it also choose the subject because it provides them with the opportunity to interact with speakers of this language (Noels, 2001). It is hardly surprising that universities keen to maintain courses despite dwindling A level numbers will incorporate research findings on what motivates students into course content but this can have obvious implications for those graduates of such courses who later choose a career in teaching and find themselves without a secure understanding of grammar.

Research abounds on how success in using a language increases pupils' motivation (Clark & Trafford, 1995, Bartram, 2010, Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). For this reason, it is really important that teachers have empathy with their pupils and work hard to establish an effective working relationship with their classes as Dewey advised. An example of how this could enhance the learning experience could be teachers and pupils having discussions about using the target language since Swarbrick (2011) cites pupils' difficulty in this as a key factor influencing their dislike of the subject.

Dewey's advice could be demonstrated if the teacher shows sensitivity towards pupils' embarrassment and reluctance, perhaps sharing examples of his or her own learning experience.

In line with present day thinking, Dewey focussed on individual pupils' needs as a major responsibility of the educator:

He must, in addition, have that sympathetic understanding of individuals as individuals which gives him an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning (Dewey, 1997: 39).

He is clearly arguing for differentiation in his earlier mentioned analogy of who would benefit most from the nutritive qualities of beefsteak and his critique of traditional education:

Failure to take into account adaptation to the needs and capacities of individuals...acquaintance with certain facts and truths possess educational value in and of themselves is the reason why traditional education reduced the material of education so largely to a diet of pre-digested materials (Dewey, 1997: 46)

Dewey critiques pedagogical advice, highlighting that the educational experience needs to be personalised for individual students. He also underlines the importance of progression when he explains that: 'it is not an invidious reflection upon trigonometry that we do not teach it in the first or fifth grade of school'. We could draw parallels here with Bloom's taxonomy which is very much *en vogue* in English schools since its recent revision (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2014), encouraging teachers to be aware of the level of challenge in the activities and questions they offer to students since those which require the higher order thinking skills such as evaluation and analysis require significantly increased cognitive challenge than lower order thinking skills such as listing and understanding (Bloom, 1956).

Perhaps one of the most significant lessons MFL teachers can learn from Dewey is the danger of sacrificing pupils' potential love of languages by focussing on preparation for future assessments:

the subjects were not actually learned, for they were learned at least sufficiently to enable a pupil to pass examination in them. One trouble is that the subject-matter in question was learned in isolation; it was put, as it were, in a water-tight compartment...But it was segregated when it was acquired and hence is so disconnected from the rest of experience that it is not available under the actual conditions of life (Dewey, 1997: 47 - 48)

When preparation is made the controlling end, then the potentialities of the present are sacrificed to a suppositious future. When this happens, the actual preparation for the future is missed or distorted. The idea of using the present simply to get ready for the future contradicts itself (Dewey, 1997: 49)

Indeed, this suggests that teachers have misunderstood Dewey's key ideas about preparation for life and are sacrificing educational experiences if they are only thinking about the future and encouraging their pupils to do the same. Pupils who choose to study MFL in order to meet selection criteria to attend top universities or to maximise their employability for example would illustrate this misinterpretation in Dewey's eyes of value.

Finally, teachers should be reminded of the importance of the actual learning environment:

A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by envioning conditions, but that they also recognise in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth (Dewey, 1997: 40).

Dewey's message here underlines that he is not just the educational experiences themselves which influence learning, the environment they take place has a powerful influence. A responsibility the teacher should not forget is to consider the nature of

the classroom. The modern day teacher should appreciate the need for order within the classroom and for pupils to feel comfortable and supported, particularly if they are engaging activities which they perceive to be difficult or embarrassing (Bartram, 2010).

I firmly believe that by attempting to emulate the recommendations of John Dewey, MFL teachers will be well placed to counter the lack of enjoyment the subject holds for many pupils (Gruneberg & Sykes, 1994) by giving prominence to its value in their hope to buck 'worrying trends in the declining level of performance in Modern Languages' (Saunders 1998:65).

Coda

At first glance, the proposals I have made following the recommendations of John Dewey may seem utopian since whole scale cultural reform is required in order to implement these ideas. Whilst policy is unlikely to change quickly (as it would normally follow a detailed investigation of the potential financial and time investment required, and indeed whether such a proposal is practical), individual professionals are able to change how they think and adjust their practice accordingly following inspirational examples or when motivated to make a difference. The predominance of English has been built up over decades, and consequently will take time to be deconstructed. In an arguably more negative picture of the current state of schooling in education, Ivan Illich, in his 1971 text, argued for the necessity of whole-scale cultural change in education which he termed the de-schooling of society. Illich paints rather a negative picture of schooling and feels we have merely become consumers of education:

As long as an individual is not explicitly conscious of the ritual character of the process through which he was initiated to the forces which shape his cosmos, he cannot break the spell and shape a new cosmos. As long as we are not aware of the ritual through which school shapes the progressive consumer--the economy's major resource - we cannot break the spell of this economy and shape a new one (Illich, 1971: 12).

He highlighted an extreme disjunction between the ideal and the direction in which schooling and culture are heading, and believed the only way we can move away from this is to start with individuals: 'each of us is responsible for de-schooling,...

only we have the power to do it', (Illich, 1971: 10). This is strikingly similar to Dewey's thoughts on the role of the educator and the individual student. In this sense, both are arguing for a form of democratising of education of which I have claimed in this study, the learning of languages forms a central role.

**** 15977 words (excluding footnotes and References)

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